



The Secretary of the Committee
Joint Committee on National Capital and External Territories
Inquiry into Pay Parking in the Parliamentary Zone

I write in reference to the invitation to comment on the above inquiry.

As someone who works in the Parliamentary Zone (John Gorton Building). I wish to register my opposition to the introduction of pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone in its current state.

I have examined the relevant sections of the outcomes of the Parliamentary review and find that while the needs of visitors and the institutions in the zone have been emphasized, the needs of employees within the zone have been far too easily dismissed.

The review identifies the conflict that exists in some areas between the parking needs of workers and the needs of visitors. The solution proposed, to discourage workers from using car parks through pay parking (and possibly, reduction of parking spaces), neglects to take account of why workers in this area find it necessary to utilize private transport. In focusing on making the Parliamentary Zone a "place of the people" it overlooks the needs of the people already there. I would suggest the following factors contribute towards the use of private transport:

- Lack of adequate public transport. Unlike most other centres of employment in Canberra, the Parliamentary Zone is not a public transport hub. Public transport services in the Parliamentary Zone do not represent a viable alternative. Transport is disorganised during peak times and inadequate outside of peak times. Buses do not so much serve this area as hurriedly pass through it. For workers in this area, it is a matter of trying to catch buses as they travel between two transport hubs. Depending on the time of day, the same bus will take different routes through this area. When making connections, public transport patrons find that services that pass through the zone originate from a number of stops in each transport hub, making a quick connection from another bus akin to a game of roulette. Even if an adequate public transport system was to exist for this area, unless the Parliamentary Zone became a transport hub, patrons would invariably find themselves having to make more connections to reach their destination than other workers in the ACT.
- Need for access to private vehicles during the day. While we can all be proud of the national institutions that occupy the Parliamentary zone, they are of little relevance or benefit to the day to day needs of a worker in the zone. Apart from benefiting from the enjoyable parks and gardens, employees in this area find themselves isolated from retail outlets, professional services such as doctors and dentists, post offices, banks etc. Unlike other centres of employment in Canberra (such as Civic, Woden, and Belconnen) the Parliamentary Zone and the adjacent Barton office area is not an area of mixed office and retail, thus, unlike people in those areas, the act of coming to work does not also enable us to easily shop, pay

bills, see doctors etc in our lunch time. Employees in these areas are almost always required to drive (and pay for parking) to attend to such matters. This is not our choice, it is simply a result of how Canberra was designed.

As the terms of reference for the committee emphasize, the relationship between the Parliamentary Zone and the areas of Forrest and Barton need to be taken into account. Over a number of years there has been a progressive reduction in the number of public parking areas available in these areas (particularly when compared to the increase in office space), and the flow-on effect has added to pressure on the parking resources within the Parliamentary Zone.

I also wish to note that I am bemused by the Review's concept of equity and the user pays principle. Their proposal that workers (or commuters) pay for parking while visitors do not, would appear to be most inequitable if the objective is to ensure that the cost of the service is borne by the user. While I support the current allocation and enforcement of short term parking to cater for visitors, I suggest that if the institutions present in the zone find that they require additional free parking in order to ensure visitor numbers, perhaps they should contribute to the cost of its provision.

Although I believe that the arguments I have made are good and valid reasons why pay parking should not be put in place in the Parliamentary Zone at this time, I have little hope that they will hold sway in an environment where individuals are increasingly expected to bear the cost of services they had previously thought were provided through the taxes they already pay. It is perhaps ironic that with the introduction of pay parking, apart from tourists, the only people who are likely to enjoy free parking in the Parliamentary zone are those who could most afford to pay – Parliamentarians and the Senior Executive Service of the Public Service.

If pay parking is to be introduced, I urge that it be done only after the upgrading of public transport for this area, and that the upgrading of public transport be done in consultation with those who would use it. The Commonwealth should work with the ACT Government to ensure that this area is serviced by public transport in an equitable and satisfactory manner. I suggest that as a minimum, dedicated routes shuttling between Civic, Parkes/Barton and Woden at frequent intervals would be required. If, as is foreshadowed in the review, multi-story car parking areas are to replace existing car parks, temporary alternative parking arrangements should be provided during the period of construction.

Sincerely

David Boughey